

# Book burning/censorship and National Socialist Germany

**Book burning and censorship in National Socialist Germany** are frequently criticized, often by accompanied by dramatic photographs of book burning. Revisionists argue that there are various less politically correct aspects, including the postwar Allied book censorship and destruction of books (described as "the greatest campaign of book destruction of all time") as well as current German book censorship and book burning/destruction.

## Book burning and censorship in National Socialist Germany

"After Adolf Hitler, as chairman of the strongest political party, had taken charge of forming the new German government, the German students - acting with reference to the burning of papist literature by Martin Luther, and to the Wartburg Festival, where revolutionary students had thrown symbols of reactionary politics (including publications) onto pyres - publicly burned books of "un-German spirit". These acts were intended to be demonstrations, and had nothing to do with book banning."<sup>[1]</sup>

"Bans were first assigned in un-coordinated manner by various governmental and non-governmental offices, until the Ministry of Public Education and Propaganda, under the leadership of Joseph Goebbels, issued the only legally binding book bans via the Reich Chamber of Publications. Those black-lists of the Reich Chamber of Publications also included titles that had been on the police lists of obscene and offensive material during the Weimar Republic, but these decreased steadily in number. Instead, the literature produced by emigrants ("traitors to the people"), Marxist, Soviet authors, and others were included. [...] by the end of 1938 the Reich Chamber of Publications' list of banned books encompassed a total of 4,175 individual titles and 565 comprehensive bans, i.e. bans of all the writings of 565 authors. This number skyrocketed in 1941 when the war against the Soviet Union began and 337 additional comprehensive bans were issued against authors that were in some way positively connected with the Soviet Union."<sup>[1]</sup>

Among the authors whose books was burned and banned were:

## National Socialist Germany revisionism

Adolf Hitler

Allied psychological warfare

Book burning/censorship and National Socialist Germany

Claimed mass killings of Germans by the WWII Allies

Claimed mass killings of non-Jews by National Socialist Germany

Clean Wehrmacht

Degenerate art

Foreign military volunteers and National Socialist Germany

Gestapo

Kristallnacht

Lebensborn

Lebensraum

Master race

Munich Putsch

National Socialism and occultism

National Socialist Germany and forced labor

National Socialist Germany and partisans/resistance movements

National Socialist Germany revisionism

National Socialist Germany's nuclear weapons program

Nazi

Night of the Long Knives

Nuremberg trials

Pre-WWII anti-National Socialist Germany boycott

Revisionist views on the causes of the World Wars

Soviet offensive plans controversy

Subhumans

Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich, Stefan Zweig,  
Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Walther  
Rathenau, Max Hodann, Magnus Hirschfeld,  
Heinrich Mann, Erich Kästner, Leon Trotsky,  
György Lukács, Franz Boas, Ilya Ehrenburg,  
Arnold Zweig, and Karl Liebknecht.

Superior orders

The Holocaust

The World Wars and mass starvation

As noted below, revisionists have argued that the National Socialist regime did not destroy the books it banned, but instead collected and deposited such books in libraries with archival function.

## **Book censorship by the Allies in postwar Germany**

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"The German Administration for Public Education in the Soviet Occupation Zone cooperated with the Office for the Review of Publications to release, via the Deutsche Bücherei in Leipzig, lists of literature to be proscribed, which also found official use in the western occupation zones. The first such list from 1946 was followed by three supplements, totaling 34,645 book titles [VHO counts altogether 32826 books, cf. Books letter Z, and together with Journals 35743, cf. Journals letter Z]. Beyond that, a comprehensive ban without individual title listing was applied to all school textbooks from 1933 to 1945."<sup>[1]</sup>

Banned books included not just books by the NSDAP, but also, for example, books by prominent Germans who had died long before the NSDAP was created, books that had been banned in National Socialist Germany, and books that do not seem to have any kind of association with the NSDAP.<sup>[1]</sup>

## **Book destruction by the Allies in postwar Germany**

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"It is common practice at public events and in publications to make emphatic reference to the book- banning during National Socialist times, without, however, making any mention of the book destruction engaged in by the victorious powers after Germany had lost the Second World War - a destruction that was more rigorous and extensive in every respect."<sup>[1]</sup>

"Whereas during National Socialist times banned books were collected and deposited in libraries with archival function, the Allied Control Council decreed that all publications and materials mentioned in the order were to be "released to the Commanders of each Zone, to be destroyed." And indeed, all books containing "National Socialist propaganda, racial teachings and calls to violence, or propaganda directed against the United Nations" were removed from the "former government and city libraries", from the "universities, the establishments of higher and middle education, from all research institutes and academies, from all technical or academic societies", and even from the elementary schools, from all bookstores and publishing houses - and then destroyed. This was no doubt the greatest campaign of book destruction of all time."<sup>[1]</sup>

## **Later book censorship and book destruction/burning in Germany**

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Germany continues to ban books, including, but not limited to, books on revisionist topics. At least some of the banned books have been stated to be burned.<sup>[2]</sup>

See also Anti-Holocaust revisionism: Censorship, persecution, and prohibition of Holocaust revisionism.

## Gallery

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Opernplatz, Berlin book burnings



German students and SA members plunder the library of Magnus Hirschfeld, Director of the Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin



German students with burning torches and a bust of the jewish sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld in 1933

## See also

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- Writers' War Board - An influential WWII American quasi-governmental propaganda organization, involved in the staging of thousands of propaganda commemorations of book burnings in National Socialist Germany.
- Frankfurt School

## External links

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- National-Socialist Book Burning (<https://codoh.com/library/document/national-socialist-book-burning/en/>)
- The Greatest Campaign of Book Destruction in all of History (<http://www.vho.org/censor/LuedersGB.html>)
- Censorship in Germany? Never! Unless... (<http://www.vho.org/censor/D.html#GB>)
- Why They Don't Want You To Know What Types of Books the Nazis Burned (<https://www.dailyveracity.com/2022/12/20/why-they-dont-want-you-to-know-what-types-of-books-the-nazis-burned/>)

- [Book Burning in Berlin - 1933 \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIKJ8Tc0fvE\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIKJ8Tc0fvE) - YouTube

## References

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1. The Greatest Campaign of Book Destruction in all of History <http://www.vho.org/censor/LuedersGB.html>
  2. Censorship in Germany? Never! Unless... <http://www.vho.org/censor/D.html#GB>
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